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# THE GOOD VOICES.

A CHILD'S GUIDE TO THE BIBLE.

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# THE GOOD VOICES.

A CHILD'S GUIDE TO THE BIBLE.



# THE GOOD VOICES,

A CHILD'S GUIDE TO THE BIBLE.

BY

THE REV. EDWIN A. ABBOTT, M.A.

HEAD-MASTER OF THE CITY OF LONDON SCHOOL ;

AUTHOR OF "BIBLE LESSONS.



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## PREFACE.



*THE object of these simple stories is to prepare little children for the study of the Bible by imbuing them with the feeling that at all times and in all circumstances, whether in town or country, at work or at play, they are living in the presence of a Heavenly Father, who is continually speaking to them with the Good Voices of Nature and Revelation.*

*No attempt is made to give a summary of Sacred History, but rather to bring out in an interesting way, intelligible to very young children, some of the spiritual teaching*

*contained in that History; so as to prepare the little readers for treating the Book of Books as something higher and holier than a mere collection of battles, genealogies, and portents. I think it is a mistake to encourage a child, without some such preparation, to turn over at random the pages of a pictorial Bible.*

*The illustrations will, I trust, speak for themselves. If they please other little children as much as they have pleased the little child for whom this book was written, M. C. will have ample reason to be satisfied.*



MY DEAR CHILD,



**T**AKE a good book and put it on the table. There it lies quite silent between its covers: it says nothing to you, and seems to have no voice. But now open the covers and

turn over the pages and look at them carefully. Now, each page in the book, if you have learned to read, begins at once to have a good voice. It cannot speak aloud, but it speaks quietly to you, either some pleasant story about giants and fairies, or else, perhaps, about birds and flowers, or about the Good God who is the kind Father of us all.

The whole world is like that book, and has good voices. Everything in the world, not only things that speak aloud, like men and women, and birds and beasts; but all things, books and pictures, clouds and stars, the flowers in the garden, and the stones on the road, all have good voices, and all have something to say to you.

Some of these voices, like the voice of the thunder, are strange and hard even for grown-

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up people to understand; others are easy and good for little children to hear. When the sun shines in the morning, making the streets and fields bright and all the birds merry, has he not a good voice, although you cannot hear it with your ears, and does he not say to you, "God is kind, and likes to see all things happy"?

But the best voice of all is the voice of the Book called the Gospel, which tells us about gentle Jesus, meek and mild, who looks kindly on little children, and who first taught us to call God our Father in Heaven.

The Good Voices often speak very softly and quietly, and you will not be able to hear them if you do not listen with all your might. But, if you do listen, do you know what the Good Voices will say to you? I will tell

you. Look at that child in the picture listening to the murmuring of the shell. Just as that small shell with its quiet murmuring reminds him a little of the loud roaring of the far-off sea, so this great and glorious world with all its different voices reminds us a little, a very little, of the greatness and the glory of the unseen God, who is as much more great and glorious than the world as the sea is greater than that little shell.

If you want to be good, like the Good God your Father in Heaven, you must try to understand "THE GOOD VOICES."



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THE GOOD VOICES.





### THE VOICE OF THE STARS.

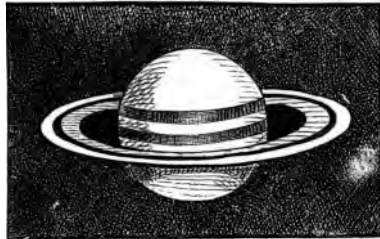
**G**O to the window when it is dark, and look up at the stars. Try to count them. The longer you look, the more stars you will see. Every one of these stars is much larger than it seems. Almost all are a great deal larger than the earth on which we live. They are all far away from us and from one another, so far that, even if you could fly like a pigeon, and could fly for a whole year

without stopping, you could not reach them; nor could you fly from one to another. Yet there they are, hung in the air and kept from falling.

They never stray from the paths in which they move. Put your finger on the window-pane, so as just to cover one of the stars, and keep still, looking for two or three minutes. You will see that the star seems to have moved. Most of the stars seem to move like the sun: a few move differently; but all of them move evenly and regularly, not like a crowd of boys at play, but like soldiers marching where their captain bids them.

Who made the stars? God made them. It is God that bids the stars move as He wills: and they have obeyed Him and will obey Him for thousands of years. When we look up at the stars, they sometimes make us feel that they are wonderfully and gloriously made. Whenever we feel this, God is giving the stars a Voice, and they speak to us quietly in our hearts, and say, "God's works are glorious and great."

I told you that every one of the stars is much larger than it seems. Here is one, that looks to you like a little dot ; but if you could see it closer, it would look like this picture.





### THE RAINBOW AND THE GARDEN



The rainbow is a sign of the  
 good, but the garden is just  
 a sign of the good. At clouds  
 you will see that the  
 garden is clouds with red  
 raindrops. If he were giving  
 the garden to the clouds. Then look at the

The garden  
 is a sign of



shapes of the clouds, and see how pleasant they are to look at. Some are flat and hard-looking, with borders of gold; some wreath and wind about like the steam that comes from a railway engine; some are like long ringlets of hair, some like a horse's mane; some are like dots in rows, reminding us of a flock of sheep in a field; but all of them do us good to look at.

Then go into some park, or into the fields, early on a fine spring morning, as early as you can after sunrise, when the trees are fresh in leaf. Look at the dew-drops, how they sparkle on the grass—green and red and blue and yellow. Listen to the birds—the robin, the thrush, and the blackbird—how cheerfully they sing, all differently and yet all sweetly. Look at the trees—the strong broad oak, the tall elms, the white flowers of the horse-chestnut, the birch with its white trunk and delicate boughs like waving hair, and the willow drooping over the water. Then look up at the great bright blue sky above, and down again at the green grass dotted with daisies and buttercups,



and think to yourself, "God made all these beautiful things."

Whenever we look at these things in this way, God gives them a Voice, and they speak to us quietly in our hearts, and say, "Are not God's works full of beauty?"





THE VOICES OF THE LEAVES AND THE  
SNOW-FLAKES.



O not think that God takes care about the great things in the world and not about the little things as well.

Take up a little daisy, and look closely at it. See how carefully the little fringe of white is set all round the yellow part in the middle. Now pick the fringe to pieces and see how carefully each

little piece is made. Then take the yellow part and pick it to pieces; you will find that each little yellow piece is a stalk carefully made by itself.

Think of this. Every time that you look at a little daisy like this, God speaks to you with the Voice of that little daisy, and says to you quietly in your heart, "I take care of little things as well as of great things; I take care of the sun and moon and stars, but I take care of the little daisies as well."

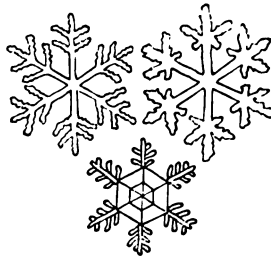
Now look at a lump of snow. If you cannot see one now, at all events you can remember how it looks. What do you see? Nothing but a lump of white stuff. Well, but if we take a little piece of this snow and look at it more carefully through a glass that makes things look bigger, we shall see something more than a white lump: we shall see a lot of pretty patterns, crosses, and diamonds, and others that we never dreamed of, all hidden in this lump of snow.

What does God tell us by this? He gives



a Voice to that little lump of snow, and it says to us, "There are a great many more beautiful things in God's beautiful world than little children can see. The more you look at God's works, the more beautiful they will seem."

Here are some pictures of the pretty snow-patterns.





### THE VOICE OF THE HAND.



**P**EN your hand and look at it. It will teach you something. Perhaps you say, "How can such a common thing as that teach me anything? Trees and clouds and stars are grand and beautiful: they can teach us many things; but what can I learn from my little hand?" I will try to shew you.

Look at the hands of the child and of the monkey, and see whether you can find any difference between them. Perhaps you say, "There is very little difference between the child's hand and the monkey's; I would as soon have the monkey's hand as my own." But now look very carefully at the monkey's thumb. It is much shorter than yours. The top of his thumb only just reaches to the place where his fingers begin. So you see he cannot use his thumb, as you can use yours.

You can join the tip of your thumb with the tips of all your fingers; he cannot; he can only bring the thumb and fingers pretty close together, without making them meet. You can easily pick up a pin from the floor with your thumb and fingers; the poor monkey cannot. He can catch hold of the branches of trees with his long fingers, and swing from one to the other: but he cannot take tight hold of little things as you can.

Now just think for a moment what would

become of men if they had the same kind of thumbs as that monkey has. Try and take up and hold a pen or a stick in your fingers without the help of your thumb: do you not feel how helpless you are, how weak your hand seems? Can you guide your pen rightly, or can you hold your stick firmly? I am sure you cannot. So, you see, by just making your thumb a little longer than the monkey's thumb, God has helped you to write and draw and paint, and to work with all sorts of tools, in a way impossible for the monkey.

Now, if you had not thought of this, you might have said, "There is nothing very wise in making a child's hand:" but now you see there is a great deal of wisdom. All God's works are full of wisdom in the same way. He makes everything so that it may do just what it is intended to do. The monkey's hand He makes fit for swinging from branch to branch, and He makes men's hands fit for doing all sorts of wonderful works that no beasts can do.

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Now, you see, even your little hand, as well as the clouds and stars, can teach you something. It has a Voice as they have, and it says to you, "Trust in God, for He is very wise."







### THE VOICE OF THE YEAR.



**F** you can read these little lessons, I am quite sure you can answer this question: "How old are you?" Perhaps you are only five or six years old; but, even if you are so young, you can remember the difference between winter and summer. In winter you know that the days are very short and the nights very long, so that you have to get up when it is almost dark. As the spring comes on, the days become longer, and the

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nights shorter, till at last they are equal: then, as the summer draws near, the days become longer, longer than the nights, so that the night in summer is as short as the day was in winter. Then, after that, the nights begin to grow longer and the days shorter, till we come round to winter again.

Now, if a little boy notices the days and nights for only a short time, for only eight or nine months, for example, he might say, "The days and nights change in a very funny way: sometimes the days are longer than the nights, at other times the nights are longer than the days; there is no rule about them." But he would be wrong. If he went on noticing a little longer, he would see that there is a rule, and that the year comes round again, like the hole in a humming-top, to the same place from which it started.

I will shew you the little boy's mistake by a picture. Look at this dotted line .... Is it a straight line, or bent, or what? Perhaps you hardly know. But now look at the dotted line at the top of the picture at the

beginning. There you can see more of the line, and you notice now that it is not straight, but bent; it is part of a round line, which we call a *circle*. You could not tell that, when you saw a little bit of the line; but now that you see much more of it, you see that it is a circle.

Now God's works are like that circle. When we see only a little bit of them, the little bit often looks like that dotted line, and we cannot tell what it is like, whether it is beautiful or ugly, regular or irregular. But when we see more, then we find that His work is beautiful and according to rule.

Many of God's works shew at once that they are according to rule, or regular; and we are so accustomed to the regularity that we hardly notice it. For example, acorns always make oaks, and chestnuts chestnut trees; a stone falls always downwards; grass is green, and never red or blue. Your own body shews you that God likes order and regularity. You see that one side of your body is exactly like the other, eye like eye, hand like hand, foot like

foot, and so on: even where the likeness is not exact, there is some likeness. Pull a leaf from an oak or a plane tree. You will see that the leaf is divided into two halves. Look how very like the two halves are, though they are not quite the same.

Now, what I want you to remember is this, that God does not do His works at random, or, like a foolish child, without care and order. He does not change His mind. He loves order.

If there were no order in the world, what would become of us? If to-day the sun rose at five o'clock, and to-morrow at nine o'clock, what would men do? How would they know when to get up? What would that little lark, in the picture, do, that gets up every morning before all the other birds, to say good morning to the sun? If winter came to-day, and summer to-morrow, and spring next day, how would you know what clothes to wear, and, besides, what would become of the harvests? Or if wheat-seed sometimes produced onions and turnips produced mustard, what would men do for bread, and sheep for pasture?

You see, then, that our happiness depends on God's orderly ways. We ought to be very glad that God is so orderly, and does not change His mind. God tells us every day by His works that He loves order; and, if in any of His works we cannot see order, we ought to say, "That is because we only see part of His work. We only see the dotted line; if we saw the whole line, we should find that it was regular and orderly."





#### ANIMALS.

**L**OOK at your cat when it is sitting quietly purring before the fire. Does it not seem happy? Or look at a dog frisking round its master, barking and wagging its tail, or lying quietly by its master's side. Does not the dog seem happy? Look again at the sheep and cows and horses in the fields, feeding or lying down. Or look at the birds hopping from twig to twig, and chirping or singing: look at the butterflies flying in the

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sunshine from flower to flower. Do they not all seem happy? Sometimes they are not happy when they are ill, or hurt, or frightened, or have not enough to eat, but that very seldom happens. For the most part they seem full of happiness.

Now think of your own self, for you also are an animal. Do you know what an animal is? An animal is anything that breathes; and, since you breathe, you are an animal. Now, is it not pleasant to you to run and jump and play? Do you not like to see and hear and feel? Is it not pleasant to be alive and to be well? Perhaps you hardly know how much more pleasant it is to be well than to be ill. But now, ask some one, if you like, to give you a good pinch, and then think to yourself, "How should I like to feel all day as though some one were pinching me?" Sometimes you are ill, and then you are in pain: but most children are not often ill. God might have made it painful for us to see and hear and feel, but He has made it very pleasant, for He is very kind.

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Whenever we feel happy, and whenever we see other creatures happy, God says to us quietly in our hearts, "I wish you to be happy, for I am very kind. I paint the wings of the butterfly, so that he is a pleasure to look at : but I do more than that. I make him glad in the sunshine and amid the lovely flowers : and I send him to you, my dear little children, to tell you that God loves to see all things glad."







THE VOICE OF PAIN.



**S**OMETIMES we are not happy ;  
sometimes we are in pain. If  
you are careless, and do not  
look where you are going, you  
fall down and hurt yourself ; if  
you disobey your parents and play with fire,  
you may scorch or burn yourself to death ; if

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you are greedy and eat more than is good for you, you make yourself sick and ill. When God pains us in these ways, He says to us, "You must be careful; you must be obedient; you must not be greedy."

But sometimes we are pained without fault of ours. Some little children are born blind, or lame, or deaf; others are born feeble and sickly, so that they never know what it is to be quite well. And all of us know what it is to be in pain sometimes—to have a headache, or ear-ache, or some other little illness. What does God teach us when He pains us in this way? I think He says to us, "I have not sent you into the world merely to make your bodies happy. You cannot have everything that you like."

Little children are much more helpless and feeble when they are babies, than young horses and cows, and most other young animals. Babies have many more pains and illnesses, and want much more care and attention than butterflies or birds. When a duck hatches her brood, the little ducklings run down the same

day to the water and swim at once; but a baby is often more than a year old before it can walk. Why does God make you so helpless when you are little babies? I think it is to make your father and mother take great care of you and love you very much, and also to make you love your father and mother very much when you grow up to be old and to know what they did for you.

The hen loves her little chickens very much, and will fight for them against a cat, or even against a grown man. But as soon as the little chickens grow up, they forget their mother, and the mother forgets them. But your mother and father will never forget you, and you will never forget them.





### THE FATHER.



OD tells us, through the stars and the clouds and the daisies, that He is great and that all His works are beautiful; and He tells us by our bodies that He wishes our bodies to be happy. But He also tells us something better than that.

If your body were ever so happy, if you had everything that you liked to eat, and all the toys you wanted, and a pony to ride

on, would you be sure to be quite happy? Perhaps you say "Yes." But what if your father were all the while angry with you, and your mother did not love you, and your brothers and sisters disliked you? Would you be happy then, even though you had the prettiest pony in the world? I do not think you would. You might be happy for a day or two, while you were full of the thought of your pony and could not think of your father and mother; but soon you would feel unsatisfied and uneasy.

Your body would be satisfied, but something else in you would not be satisfied. Something else in you would say, "I want my father and mother to love me." You cannot see this "something else:" you cannot touch it or hear it; but it has a name, and is called a "soul." Everyone has a soul as well as a body. A child's soul is that thing in him which says, "I want to be loved by my parents."

Now listen, while I tell you the best news I know about God. God does not want only

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our bodies to be happy, He wants our souls to be happy, also. How does He tell us this? I will try to shew you.

Once upon a time there was a little child. He had been blind and always ailing ever since he had been born, so that he could not see the blue sky or the sun, nor go out into the fields to enjoy the fresh air and to play at merry games, but had to lie on his bed all the day long. Yet, though God could not speak to this poor blind child through the stars or the clouds or the flowers in the fields, He spoke to him in another way. This little boy had a father who was very kind to him, making toys for him, and telling him stories, and amusing him in every way. He brought the boy a tame singing bird, and used to bring him home fresh flowers to smell; and sometimes when the little fellow was in very great pain, so that he could not help crying out, his father used to take him up in his arms and kiss him.

Sometimes the father used to speak to his on about God, how God made all things,

beautiful things that the child could never see, the sun and moon and the stars. One day, seeing a rainbow through the window, he began to speak to the child about it, how beautiful it is, and how God speaks to us by the rainbow, and tells us that He loves things bright and beautiful. "Tell me, then," said the child, "what a rainbow is like." So the father began to describe the beautiful colours of the rainbow, purple and red and orange and green. But presently he remembered that the poor boy did not know even what a colour was like, so that all the description was nonsense to him. Then he left off speaking, for he felt very sad. But the child said to him, "Did God make you, Papa?" "Yes, my darling." Then the child thought to himself (though he could not put the thought into words at the time) something like this: "If God made my father, I know God must be good and loving, for my father is good and loving, and I would sooner that God made him than that He made all the rainbows in the sky."

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You see how God taught that blind helpless child. To every little child that has a kind father and mother, God says quietly in the little child's heart, "If your father and mother are so kind, do you not think I am very kind, for I gave you both your father and your mother?"

Look at that foxglove in the picture below. Just as the bright sun makes the foxglove shoot forward to the light and upward to the sky, so the good God, our Father, by His love and kindness, draws us toward Him, and lifts up our hearts to Him in heaven above.







THE CHILD THAT HAD NO FATHER.



LITTLE child, that had lost his father when he was quite a baby, was one day told in school that God is "our Father," and loves us as a father loves his little children. He went home from school very sadly, thinking to himself, "What do I know about a father? My schoolfellows may say

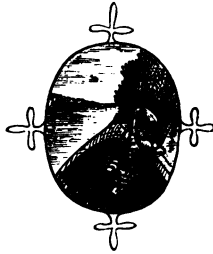
‘Our Father,’ but I cannot understand it, because I never knew what a father’s love is.”

He was saying this aloud to himself, sitting by the side of a little pond, when he heard footsteps behind him, and there was his teacher, who had heard all that he was saying. “Do you see the picture of the sun in the still surface of the pond?” said the teacher. “You cannot look at the sun in heaven without being dazzled, though it is shining through a little cloud; but the picture in the water shews you the brightness of the sun without dazzling you. Just in the same way God in heaven shews Himself to little children by their father on earth.” The little boy began to cry. “I have no father,” he said, “so I have nothing to shew me the brightness of God.”

The teacher threw a handful of stones into the pond. “Do you see how the surface of the pond is troubled? You cannot see the same picture that you saw just now; yet the sun’s brightness is still on the water: only instead of that one large picture there

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are a lot of small bits of the picture :—  
but, though they are small, they are many,  
shewing us how bright the sun is. Just in  
the same way God has troubled the surface  
of your life, and taken away your father ; but  
He has given you kind friends on all sides,  
and from their kindness and their love you  
will be helped to understand the kindness and  
love of the ‘ Father in heaven. ’ ”





THE FATHER AND THE SERVANTS. .

**F**OR many thousands of years God taught men about Himself through the clouds and the stars and the flowers, and also through fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters; yet all this teaching was not enough. Why not? I will snew you. But first I must tell you a story.

There was once a kind father, who took

good care of his little boy, and gave him plenty to eat and drink and plenty of pretty toys. But he would not let him eat and drink anything unwholesome, or more than was good for him, even though the child cried for it. When the little fellow was old enough, the father began to teach him to read. But the boy did not like learning at all, and he did not know how useful and pleasant it is to read, and so he thought his father was very unkind in making him learn.

So, whenever his father came into the room to teach him, the child would try to hide or to run away; and if he was obliged to read, he used to cry, and fret, and read very badly; sometimes he would not read, and then he was punished. At other times, when his father was away, he used to neglect the lessons that his father gave him to do; and if he could find anything nice to eat left about, he used to steal it. Then, he used to feel ashamed and uneasy, and he dared not look his father in the face. So, by little and little, he became frightened of his father and did not love him

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as before. Often he used to say to himself, "I wonder why my father will not allow me to be happy and to do just what I like. He will not let me eat and drink nice things, nor as much as I want, and he makes me learn hard lessons. I do not think he loves me."

Sometimes the little boy's parents used to go away from home. At such times they used to speak to the nurse and say, "Take care that our little boy does not forget his reading; mind and give him a little lesson every day, and do not let him eat or drink too much so as to make himself ill and a glutton." But when they had gone away, the servant used sometimes to forget to give the little boy his lessons; or else, she was very busy, and did not take the trouble to make time for the reading. So, very often, the little boy had no reading lessons. That pleased him very much, and he said to himself, "The servants are kinder than my father; they let me eat green apples and as much sugar as I like, and besides, they do not make me learn those hard lessons. I am not afraid of them. I

like them better than I like my father, because they let me do as I like, and my father will not. If I want anything nice, I shall not ask my father, I shall go to them."

Now this is just what happened to grown-up men and women hundreds of years ago. God wished to teach them, as He wishes to teach us, to be kind to each other, to be industrious, and brave, and wise. So He gave them all sorts of work and lessons. He taught them how to plough, so as to earn their bread, and he taught them how to weave, so as to make clothes to keep them warm. He taught them also to fight against savage beasts; and he shewed them, when they were in pain with illness or suffering, that it is pleasant to be pitied; and in this way He taught them that men must pity others just as they like to be pitied themselves.

But, like that foolish boy, men did not like learning these lessons. They said, "Why does not God let us do as we like? Why does He want to make us learn these hard lessons? He tells us to be kind to each



other ; and he makes us uneasy when we are not kind. This lesson is too difficult. We are afraid of this God, for He does not seem to like us, and we cannot understand Him. Perhaps there is some other god whom we can understand better."

Then they looked all round on God's beautiful world, trying to find out some god whom they could understand. They saw that God's works were full of power and wisdom and beauty, and they said, "God is Power," "God is Wisdom," "God is Beauty." So they made images, such as you see in the picture at the beginning, of wise and powerful men, and of beautiful children and women, and they said, "These are gods ; we can understand them and are not afraid of them."

Then they came to think one god might wish one thing, and another god might wish something else quite the opposite, and that one god might fight against another, and that a god might do wrong.

Next they came to think that there might be bad and cruel gods that liked to do harm



to men. "We must worship these cruel gods," they said, "or else they will hurt us." So sometimes they made horrible images of ugly gods, and tried to bribe these gods that were no gods, by offering them the blood of their innocent little children.

Here below are pictures of some of these ugly gods.





GOD'S MESSENGERS.

**Y**OU see then that the beautiful world could not teach men enough of the truth about God. What then did God do? He breathed the truth into the hearts of different men, and sent them to tell the truth to others. He did not tell

all the truth at once, because men could not have understood it.

To one man He said, "I do not wish men to do wrong; I wish them to be innocent and good:" to another He said, "I hate murder, and I will punish the wicked:" to another, "I protect all those that trust in me:" to another, "Men must not worship images, but the One God:" to another, "I will pull down the proud and raise up the humble:" to another, "I look at the inside, at the hearts of men, not at the outside:" to another, "I will purify men from their sins, and make them good and honest:" to others, "I will send some one to save men from all evil."

Many of the men into whose hearts God breathed these truths were called Prophets. A Prophet is a man sent by God to tell men what God wishes, and what God is going to do.

You see, in the picture at the end, a sailor-boy high up on the mast of a ship. Just as that sailor-boy can see farther off than the men on deck when a ship or cloud is coming

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near, so a Prophet can see, more clearly than others, what God is bringing or going to bring to men.

Here is a story about a Prophet whose name was Elijah. In his time the king and queen, and almost all the people, had left off worshipping the true God, and used to worship false gods of wood and stone. Elijah was a brave man, and he told the wicked queen and the king (whose name was Ahab) that they were wrong, and that God would punish them. Soon afterwards he heard that the queen intended to kill him; so he ran away out of the country a long way off into a lonely wilderness, where he lived by himself in a dark cave.

Here he thought over all that had happened, how all the people had turned from the true God to the false gods, and how, though he had done many wonderful works, yet no good seemed to have come of them. All that he had done seemed useless, and he, the Prophet of God, had to run away from the anger of the queen, as though he

were a cowardly slave. So he said to himself in the darkness of his cave, "Why does not God make the people believe in Him? Why does he not come down from heaven working some mighty wonder, tearing the sky open, or overturning the hills, or shaking the whole earth, so as to force everyone to say, 'This is the true God coming down from heaven'?" All that I have done is useless. I am tired of living and doing no good. Suffer me to die, O God."

Then that Breath of God of which I spoke just now to you said to him, "Go out of this dark cave where you can see nothing, and listen to what God will teach you outside." Then Elijah went out, and first he heard a terrible whirlwind raging round the mountain, uprooting the trees and dashing the rocks about; so he thought to himself, "God is here." But the Voice said to him, "No; God is not here." After that, he saw a fearful earthquake making the earth tremble and wave like the ripples of a river blown by the wind. "Surely," said Elijah to him-

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self, "God must be in this fearful earthquake." But the Voice said, "No; God is not here." Then Elijah saw a vast fire, larger and brighter than any fire you ever saw or will see, burning up everything that came in its way; and he said, "At last God is coming: He must be here." But the Voice said once more, "No; God is not here."

Then suddenly there came a still small Voice, speaking so solemnly and awfully that Elijah felt as though the words pierced through his very heart, and now he knew that this was the very Word of God: so he covered his face in his cloak and listened, and the Voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Then Elijah repeated what he had said before, that all the people had turned from the true God, and that he had been obliged to run away to save his life.

Then the Voice answered, "Go, and tell another man, whose name is Elisha, that he is to be prophet in your place. And do not fret or be anxious as though I cannot do what is best. There are other kings besides Ahab,

and other prophets besides you. You think too much about yourself, and do not trust enough in Me. There are thousands of your countrymen of whom you know nothing, who worship Me and do not worship false gods." So Elijah went and did as God told him, and another prophet, named Elisha, came to speak to the people. As for Ahab, the bad king, he was killed in battle, and the wicked queen was also killed soon afterwards.

God taught Elijah, and He teaches us, that His works are mostly quiet and orderly, and very often slow. We must not be impatient and say, "Why does not God send a whirlwind, or an earthquake, or a fire to make all people good?" We must try to listen to Him when He speaks to us in our hearts in His own way with a still small voice.

God speaks to you not only through the clouds and stars but also through all good people and good books. There is a volume called the Bible that contains a great number of good books in which God speaks to us. These books were written at different times

by many different people,—priests and prophets, soldiers and kings, shepherds and fishermen; but God speaks to us through all of them. I am now going to tell you something about the Voices of the Bible.

Here is the picture of the sailor-boy on the sloping mast of a ship tossing on the sea. How different it is from the picture of Elijah at the beginning! The sailor-boy sees clouds and ships; but the Prophet sees something that no eye can see, the will of the unseen God.







### ABRAHAM.



**A**TOLD you that God breathed some of the truth about Himself into the hearts of different men. Now I am going to tell you about one of these men, whose life is written in the Bible. His name was Abraham.

In Abraham's time many people had made

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images of false gods, and worshipped these images. And, as I told you before, they used sometimes to kill their own little children and offer the blood to these dumb images, hoping by this means to make the false gods kind to them.

Now Abraham believed that there were not many gods, but that there was one God, and that He was very good: and Abraham trusted in God because he felt sure that God would always do what was right. God loved Abraham, and promised to take care of him. At first Abraham had no child. But God promised him that he should have a child, and that his grandchildren and great-grandchildren should increase till they became a great nation. Abraham believed this, although it seemed very unlikely, and although nobody thought he would have a son at all. At last he had a son, and called his name Isaac.

You may be sure Abraham loved his son very dearly and took great care of him. For he had long wished for a son in vain, and his wife Sarah had given birth to no other

son but Isaac; and, besides, if Isaac died, all the great promises of God would come to nothing. But one day Abraham was thinking of God, how good and kind God is, and how men ought to be willing, if God wished, to give up everything, money, or houses, or lands, or anything. Then it occurred to him, "Should I be willing to give up my darling Isaac to God? Other people, that worship bad gods, kill their children to please their gods; should I be willing to do as much for the good God?" Then God said to him, "It is right that you should give up even your dear son to me." So Abraham was very sad, but he said, "If God says it is right, it must be right, and I must do it."

So next morning he got up early with Isaac, and set out to go to the top of a mountain, where he intended to kill Isaac and offer him up to God. Isaac walked up the hill, not knowing what his father was thinking about, but supposing that Abraham was going to offer up a sheep or a cow. For



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you must know that in the old times, when people said their prayers, they used often to kill and offer up some animal to God, as much as to say, "O God, I am yours, for you made me. But I cannot give myself to you, so I give the life of this animal instead." They used to call this *sacrificing*. So Isaac said, "Father, where is the animal for the sacrifice?"

This made Abraham sadder than ever, but he looked at his dear innocent child, and said, "God will provide a lamb for the sacrifice." Then they went on to the top of the hill, and you may fancy how terrified poor Isaac was, and how sad Abraham was, when Isaac was blindfolded, and Abraham standing with the knife ready to kill his darling son.

But just when Abraham was going to strike, God said to him, "Do not kill your son. You have given up your son to me in your heart. I am good, and if you want to give your son to me, the right way is to make him good that he may obey me. Look at that ram in the thicket. Kill that instead of Isaac."

So Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw a ram caught by his horns in a thicket : and he took it and killed it instead of Isaac, and said, "O God, I am yours, and Isaac is yours : we both belong to you ; but we must not kill ourselves to give ourselves to you, so we kill this ram instead : we ask you to take this as a sign that we want to give ourselves to you."

Then they went down the mountain and returned home.

Thus God taught Abraham that we must love God better than anyone else, and that we must be ready to give up everything to please Him, but God does not wish us to do wrong in order to please Him.





JACOB.



**WILL** now tell you a story about another of God's servants called Jacob. At first he was not at all good. He told a lie to his father, and behaved unkindly and deceitfully to his elder brother. But God punished him for this. Jacob was obliged to go away from his comfortable home for fear he

should be killed by his elder brother whom he had deceived. Then, when he found himself away from his home, all alone in the dark night, he was sorry for what he had done. But still he trusted in God, and said his prayers before he lay down to sleep: and then, though he had no bed-room or bed-clothes, and nothing but a stone for a pillow, he lay down peacefully and went fast to sleep.

While he was asleep he saw a wonderful sight. There seemed to float before him a number of bright forms with wings, such as we call angels, which came down from heaven to earth to shew him that God was near him in the dark as well as by day, and would take care of him.

And God did take care of him, and made him a good man in the end. First of all Jacob lived with a relation of his, called Laban, who had a great number of sheep, and Jacob said to Laban, "If you will give me your daughter Rachel to be my wife, I will take care of your sheep, and be your shepherd for seven years."

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But Laban cheated and deceived Jacob, just as Jacob had cheated and deceived his own father and brother, so that Jacob had to be Laban's servant many more years than he had intended; and while he was waiting all that time as a servant, Jacob said to himself, "What a shame it is to cheat and to deceive people! I will not deceive anyone else as I deceived my father, for I do not like to be deceived myself."

But God blessed Jacob and took care of him, so that after many years he was able to go back home with Rachel and twelve sons; and he took with him great flocks of sheep that had been given to him as his wages.

On his way home he met his elder brother, whose name was Esau, and Esau had a number of soldiers with him. Then Jacob was very frightened, and said, "How sorry I am that I behaved so badly to Esau: I will never behave so again. I will give him as many of my sheep as he likes to take for himself." But Esau was kind and good-tempered, though he was not industrious or steady; so he would



not take any of Jacob's sheep, and did no harm to his brother.

Thus Jacob came safe home to his own country, and God had taught him two things—to be honest, and to trust in God. But God had not finished teaching him, as you will see by the next story.

In the picture at the beginning you cannot see the angels very clearly: they are almost like shadows. But now here is a picture of a little child-angel, such as we hope we shall see, when we see things clearly in heaven.





### JOSEPH.

**ONE** of Jacob's twelve sons was called Joseph. He was kind and clever, but a little conceited. His father liked him better than all the rest of his brothers, and gave him a handsome dress of many colours. It was very foolish of Jacob

to favour Joseph in this way ; and you will see that it brought a great deal of trouble in the end, both on Jacob and on Joseph. Meantime it made the other brothers angry, all except Benjamin, the youngest, who was very fond of Joseph.

One day, Joseph told his brothers that he had had a dream, in which it seemed to him that his father and mother and all his brothers had bowed before him, as though he were a king. This made the brothers still more angry, and they called Joseph "the dreamer." Even Jacob was vexed, and scolded Joseph a little.

Soon after this, Jacob sent Joseph to look after the rest of the brothers, who were in some fields, many miles away, taking care of their sheep. When the brothers saw Joseph coming, they said, "Now we will kill this dreamer." But afterwards they said, "No, we will not kill him, but sell him for a slave to these travellers whom we see yonder, travelling on the road that leads to Egypt." Then said one of them, "But what shall we say to our father when he asks us 'where is Joseph'?"

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“Oh!” said another, “We will sprinkle Joseph’s fine dress with goat’s blood, and then we will show it to our father, all torn and stained with blood, and he will believe that Joseph has been killed by a wild beast.”

So that was what they did. They sold Joseph for a slave, and they brought their father the fine dress of many colours, and said, “Look at this dress: is it not the fine dress you gave to Joseph, so much finer and better than the dresses you gave to us?” When Jacob saw it, he said, “Joseph is dead,”—and he felt as though his heart was broken.

Meanwhile, poor Joseph was being carried away upon a camel, looking back in vain to the hills of his dear country. Often he said to himself in Egypt, “I wish I had not been so conceited; I wish I had not made my brothers dislike me: then I should be back in my old home with my dear father, instead of being a slave here.” But he was a good boy, and instead of doing nothing but grumble and fret, he did his work with all his might. He prayed to God, and tried to do what was

right. Almost everybody liked him; but at last a wicked woman accused him of doing wrong, so that he was thrown into a dark prison. Yet, even in the prison he trusted in God and tried to do right, so that the jailer and his fellow-prisoners liked him.

At last the king of the country was in great trouble, and wanted a wise man to help him. Then one of the king's servants, who had been a prisoner along with Joseph, said to the king, "There is no one that can help you so well as Joseph." So Joseph was sent for out of the prison, and he told the king all that he wanted to know—how a great famine would fall on the land of Egypt, and corn would be very dear; but first there would be a time of great plenty. So, by Joseph's advice, the men of Egypt did not waste the corn when it was cheap, but stored it up to be ready when the famine came.

Then everyone thanked and loved Joseph. The king gave him a gold chain to wear round his neck, and said to him, "You shall be the chief ruler in Egypt, next to me." So Joseph

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ruled over the people, and the people liked him to rule, because he ruled well.

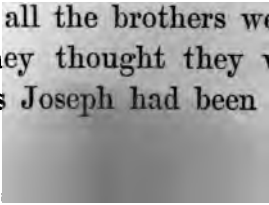
After a time the famine came, and corn was very dear, not only in Egypt, but also in the country where Jacob was living with Joseph's brothers. So one day Jacob said to his sons, "I hear that the people in Egypt have plenty of corn, while we are almost starving. Go down into Egypt and buy corn. But I will not let my youngest son Benjamin go down with you, for fear I lose him as I lost my dear son Joseph." When the brothers went down to buy corn in Egypt, the Egyptians said, "Who are these foreigners? We will bring them before our ruler Joseph, that he may find out who they are."

Joseph knew his brothers at once when they were brought before him; but he did not tell them that he knew them. He said to them, "Who is your father? How many brothers have you?" Then, when he heard that Jacob and Benjamin were alive, he could hardly help crying for joy. But he said to them, "I will not believe you unless you bring me your

youngest brother here, the one you call Benjamin. Go home and bring him. Meanwhile I shall keep one of you here in prison."

When the brothers brought back word that the ruler of Egypt would not believe them unless they took Benjamin down into Egypt, Jacob said, "I will not let him go; I have lost Joseph, and now another of my sons is gone, and you wish me to lose my little Benjamin. If I do, I shall die with sorrow—I will not let him go."

But at last, when they were nearly starving, Jacob said, "If it must be, it must be: take Benjamin and buy us some bread in Egypt." When they came down to Egypt, Joseph was very glad to see them; but he said, "Though I do not want to be unkind to them, yet it is right that they should feel what it is to be miserable, as they made me miserable." So he told one of his servants to put his silver cup into Benjamin's box. Then, when the cup was found there, all the brothers were in great trouble, for they thought they would all be made slaves, as Joseph had been made



a slave. They had been sorry, even before, for what they had done: now they were still more sorry. But in the midst of their sorrow, Joseph said, "I am your dear brother Joseph. I know you are sorry for what you did to me. I am very fond of you, and I want you all to come down and live comfortably with me in Egypt." So Jacob and all his eleven sons came down into Egypt, and there they lived all the rest of their lives.

Thus God took care of Joseph, and made both him and Jacob happy in the end, in spite of all their troubles. God takes care of those that trust in Him, and keeps off evil from them, just as the shield in this picture keeps off the arrows of the enemy:







### MOSES.



**A**FTER all the sons of Jacob were dead, their children and grandchildren still remained in Egypt, and their numbers became so large that they were now a nation, called the Israelites. The Egyptians at first liked the Israelites, but in time they said, "These Israelites will take away our



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land if they increase so quickly. How can we prevent them from increasing and becoming powerful?" Then the King of Egypt said, "We will treat them like slaves, and set them heavy work to do, and we will kill all the little Israelite boys as soon as they are born." So he gave orders that this should be done. You may fancy how sad and angry the Israelites were when they heard of this cruel order. But they were too weak to resist, and it seemed as though there was no one to help them. But God helped them at last, as you will see.

Just about this time a little Israelite boy named Moses was born. The poor mother kept him hid at home for three months; but at last she said: "Some of the Egyptian officers, who come spying into our houses, will come in suddenly and see little Moses, and kill him. I will put my little baby in a basket among the reeds, near the river's bank. If he floats down on the river, somebody may see him and take pity on him, for they will not know he is an Israelite baby."

The mother did as she said, and the king's daughter came down to the river and saw the basket. She took out the little baby, who cried so pitifully that the princess could not help feeling sorry for it. So she said, "I should like to rear this pretty baby; where can we find a nurse for it?" Now all this time the sister of Moses was stopping near the basket, watching to see what became of it; and, hearing the princess say this, she stepped forward and said, "I know an Israelite woman who will take care of this baby." So Moses was given back, to be nursed by his own mother; and I need not tell you how glad she was to have her darling baby back again.

When Moses grew up he was treated by the princess of Egypt as though he were her own son. But he knew that he was an Israelite, and could not help being sorry and angry when he saw his countrymen beaten and treated like slaves by the Egyptians. One day, seeing one of his countrymen struck by an Egyptian, he lost all patience and killed

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the Egyptian. He buried the body in the ground; but it was found out, and Moses had to run away from Egypt and live in a great sandy desert called Arabia. Here Moses waited for many years, keeping sheep, as you see him in the picture, and doing nothing for the poor Israelites, who were all the while groaning and praying for help.

You may say, "Why did God let Moses waste his time in this way?" But Moses was not wasting his time; for God was teaching him to be patient and wise, so that he might help his countrymen. While Moses was waiting, he was quietly doing a great work. That is why, in the picture at the beginning, I have shewn you Moses, not doing any of his wonderful works, but simply looking at the sky, the mountains, and his sheep, and listening to what God taught him. Then, in good time, God spoke to Moses in the desert, and said: "I have heard the cries of your poor countrymen: go and help them, and lead them out of Egypt into a land of their own. I will help you, and my help is

more than the help of men. Men change and become weak and perish ; but I never change : I am, and have been, and always shall be, the same.”

So Moses went back to Egypt, and, after many difficulties, he led his countrymen out of their slavery into the desert. The men of Egypt pursued them with a great army : but God caused the sea to rise, so that the army was covered over by the water, and every man was drowned. But the men of Israel had passed safe across into the desert or wilderness. For forty years they wandered in the wilderness, and Moses taught them what he had been taught by God, that God is One and always the same. He also gave them good laws, and trained them to behave like freemen and not like slaves. After that, he brought them to a beautiful country of their own, called Palestine, the same country in which Abraham and Jacob had lived before.

Thus, you see, from the story of Moses, that God hates cruelty and oppression, and that He will not suffer the bad to oppress

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the good for ever. Besides, you learn from Moses that God is One, and never changes.

Who would have thought that the little baby whom you see in the picture, left alone in his cradle on the dangerous river, would have grown up to be the ruler of a great nation? But God was with him and took care of him.





### SAMUEL.



**N**OW I am going to tell you a story how God spoke, not as in the last stories to a grown-up man, but to a little child not much bigger than you are. The child's name was Samuel, and he used to help to take care of the church or temple.

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How came he there? I will tell you. His mother Hannah for a long time had no child. She was very sorry for this, and prayed to God, saying, "If I have a child, I will take him into the temple to serve God there." So, after Samuel was born, she did not forget her promise; but as soon as he was old enough, she took him to the Priest in the temple, and there she used to come to see him every year. The name of the Priest was Eli. Eli was a good man, but Eli's sons, who were grown up, were very wicked; and they not only were wicked themselves, but they made other people wicked also. It was very wrong of Eli not to prevent his sons from doing wrong, for people said, "If the Priest's sons may do wicked things, what harm is there in our doing the same?"

Now Samuel heard what the people said, and he saw how much mischief Eli's sons were doing; and though he was very young, he knew that it was wrong, and he was very sorry. One evening, he lay down as usual in the church (for both he and Eli used to sleep



there), and tried to go to sleep. Suddenly, he heard a voice calling "Samuel!" He jumped up and ran to Eli's bed-side, saying, "Here I am." But Eli said, "I did not call you, Samuel; go and lie down again." Soon after he had lain down, he heard the same voice again—"Samuel!" But when he ran to Eli, he found that Eli had not called him. So he went once more to lie down, and Eli said to him, "If you hear that voice again, it is the voice of God, and you must say, 'Speak, Lord, for I am listening.'"

Presently Samuel heard the voice again. So he said, "Speak, Lord, for I am listening." Then God spoke to Samuel, and said: "I will punish Eli and his family very severely, so that all the men of Israel shall take warning. For Eli's sons have behaved wickedly, and Eli has not prevented them."

All this took place soon afterwards. Eli's sons were killed in a battle, in which the Israelites were shamefully defeated. Eli, suddenly hearing the bad news, fell from his seat, and broke his neck, and died. But as for

Samuel, he grew up to be a good and great Prophet, and he taught the men of Israel that God punishes the wicked, even though they are great and strong, but helps the good, even though they are very weak.

If Samuel had not been a very good boy, he would not have been able to hear that Voice. God speaks to you every day, not aloud, but quietly in your heart. If you want to hear what God says, you must try to be good; and never forget to say your prayers before you lie down to sleep.





DAVID.



NOW I am going to tell you another story, about a shepherd-boy who became a king of Israel. His name was David. Even when he was a boy, God taught him to trust, not in his own strength, but in God. This made David very brave, for he felt in himself, "Whatever may happen to me, God

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will do what is best. As long as I do what is right, I need not fear anything."

Once, while he was keeping his flock, a lion came and snatched up a lamb, and was carrying it away. But David by himself attacked the lion and killed him, and rescued the lamb. At another time he killed a bear in the same way.

Soon afterwards the men of Israel had to fight a great battle. They were all trembling with fear; for on the enemy's side there was an enormous giant, armed with heavy armour, and so tall and strong that when he stalked up and down between the two armies, saying, "Who is there of all you cowardly Israelites that will come and fight me?" not a single man of Israel was bold enough to come forward and say "I will fight you." But while this proud giant was boasting of his strength, and cursing the true God, it happened that David came up; for he had been sent by his father to carry some loaves to his brothers in the army. Hearing the giant's boasts and curses, and seeing all the Israelites running

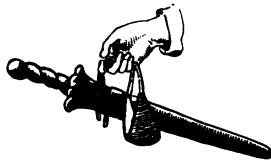
away from the giant, he said to himself: "Is it right that this giant should curse God, and that nobody should fight with him? It cannot be right. I will fight him. God helped me against the lion and the bear, and He will help me to kill the giant."

Some of his friends said to him, "If you are determined to fight the giant, let us lend you some armour, a helmet and a coat of mail and a sword." But David said, "No, I will have no armour, for I am not used to it; I will have nothing but my shepherd's crook and my sling, and five smooth round stones." When they began to fight, the giant scoffed at David, saying, "You are only a boy and not a man; and do you think you can beat me like a dog with your shepherd's stick? Come here and I will kill you, and give your flesh to wild beasts." But David said: "You trust in your spear and your shield and your armour, but I trust in the true God, who helps good men and hates oppressors. I believe God will help me to kill you, that all men may know that God helps

the good." Then the giant rushed up, and everyone thought that the shepherd-boy must be killed; but David, before the giant could strike, aimed a stone from his sling and struck him in the forehead, so that he fell fainting to the ground. Then David ran up and seized the giant's sword (for David had none of his own), and cut off the giant's head.

A few years afterwards the king of the Israelites was killed in battle, and the people chose David king in his stead.

Thus God by David's story teaches you and me that He helps the good and punishes the bad. He may not do it at once, as He did to David, but He does it in the end. By God's hand the shepherd's sling was made to conquer the giant's sword.





#### DANIEL.



OW I am going to tell you a strange story, how one of God's servants was saved from a terrible death. His name was Daniel. His countrymen had been carried away prisoners out of their own country, and had been made to live in a foreign land where the king and all the people worshipped false gods.

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Although Daniel belonged to a nation that had been conquered, yet, because of his wisdom, he was honoured by the king of the land, and was made a magistrate. But some wicked men, knowing that Daniel used every day to say his prayers to the true God, said to themselves, "If we can persuade the king to punish all that say prayers to God, Daniel will be punished." So they persuaded the king to send round an order, that anyone that said his prayers for thirty days should be put into a den where they kept a number of hungry savage lions.

When Daniel heard of this order, he did not alter his conduct at all, but said his prayers just as before, as you see in the picture at the end. So he was accused before the king; and as he had broken the order, the king, though unwillingly, felt obliged to send him to the den of lions.

The den was strewn with bones, and stained with blood of men that had been devoured by these lions: but when the lions saw Daniel, spite of their savageness and hunger,



they did not venture to touch him. So the next morning, when the king went to the lions' den and called to Daniel, expecting to receive no answer, he was rejoiced to hear Daniel's voice, saying to him, "God has shut the mouths of the lions, so that they have done me no hurt."

Then Daniel was taken out of the lions' den, and the king and all the people that heard his story said, "The God whom Daniel worships is a mighty God, and takes care of His servants. He delivers and rescues, and works wonders in heaven and earth."





#### THE LAW.



**X** SPOKE to you about a great Messenger of God, a Prophet, whose name was Moses, and I told you that the nation to which Moses belonged was called the nation of Israel, and the men were called Israelites.

We have seen that God was very kind to the Israelites. When they were made slaves, and ill-treated by another nation more powerful than themselves, God set them free, and

brought them safe to a beautiful country of their own. But, though God was kind to them, He would not let them do as they liked. On the contrary, He was strict with them, and He told Moses to give them laws to show them what was right.

The Laws of Moses said that men must not worship false gods, nor hurt one another by word or deed, for example, by killing or stealing. You will read more about the Ten Laws some other day. Meanwhile I will tell you what the last of the Ten Laws said. It said, "You must not *covet*;" that means, "You must not want to take away anything that belongs to anyone else." If your brother or cousin has a book or toy, and you say to yourself, "I should like to take away that toy or book, only I dare not, for I should be punished," then you are *coveting*, and you have broken the Tenth Law of Moses.

When the men of Israel received these Laws, they said, "These are good Laws; we must do as they tell us." But when they came to try, they found it was not easy. The Laws said,

“You must not covet; that is, you must not want to take away your neighbour’s farm, or his cattle:” but sometimes men said, “We want our neighbour’s farm, and we must have some of his cattle, for we have not enough of our own.” So, you see, they *coveted*, and sometimes they did more; they stole.

I will tell you a short story of a man that coveted. There were once in the land of Israel two farmers, whose farms were close together. One was a rich farmer, and had a large farm, and plenty of cows, and so many sheep and lambs that it would have taken you an hour to count them. The other was a poor farmer, with one small meadow, in which he kept one little lamb. All the rest of his flock had been sold, because he was so poor; only this one lamb remained. The poor man’s children were very fond of it, and they used to pick clover for it to eat, and hang garlands of flowers round its neck, and play with it; and it was so tame that it would follow them like a dog.

It happened one day that the rich man was going out into his farm to tell the butcher to

kill some of his lambs. As he was walking past the poor farmer's meadow, he heard the little lamb bleat, and he turned and looked at it over the stone wall, and said to himself, "Why should I kill one of my own lambs, when I can perhaps get this one? I will send my servants to steal the creature away."

Then God sent one of His Prophets, and the Prophet said to this selfish man: "What is the use of your going to church and saying prayers to God? God does not like your church-going and your prayers, as long as you do what is wrong. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; then God will listen to your prayers."

Then this selfish man was filled with sorrow, and he determined to try to do right. But he said to himself: "It is easy to go to church and to say one's prayers, and it is not very hard to keep my hands from stealing, and my lips from swearing. But how can I keep my heart from coveting? God may change my heart, but I cannot."

So he knelt down and said to God: "The Laws tell me what is right, but they do not

help me to do what is right. The Laws do not take away the blackness of my heart, nor can the Prophets take it away. Only God can do that. Give me a clean heart, O God!"

Look at the little girl in the picture below. She is *coveting* the apples. The Law says to her, "You must not steal," but her heart says, "I want to steal, only I am afraid." The Law does not help her to like to do right. It only makes her afraid of doing wrong. Who can help her to like to do right? I will show you in the next story.





### GOD'S SON.



**Y**OU see, then, that the Law of Moses could not make men good. It made men feel that they were not so good as they ought to be, and it made them ashamed of not being good. But it did not help them to be good. The Prophets also, and the Servants of God, though they taught



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men more and more about God, could not teach men enough, and could not make men good enough. Who was to come and teach men all about God, and make men good? I will try to tell you: but first I must tell you a story.

A little boy had been stolen away from his father's house by a bad man, who hated the boy's father. This bad man thought he would vex the father by making his child wicked; so he took the child and carried him away in a ship to a distant country, and there taught him to lie and steal and to speak ill of his own father. So the boy became a bad boy, and came to dislike and fear his own father. Once he had been an honest boy, innocent and pleasant to look at; now he became cunning, sly-looking, and ugly. After a time the wicked man set the child all sorts of hard tasks that made him weak and ill, and wore out his poor little body. But though the poor boy was so wretched, he was so frightened of his father that he would not have come back for worlds.



When the father knew that his little boy had strayed away and had fallen into the hands of his enemy the wicked man, he sent servants and messengers to ask him to come back. They could not bring the child back unless he wished: for the law of that country was that no one, who had once come to live there, should be taken away again, no matter who wanted him, unless he would go away of his own free will.

So the servants came, and one after the other tried to persuade the child to come home with them. "Come back," they said, "to your father: he cannot bear you to live with this wicked man, and he will be vexed if you do not come back." Then they would say, "How changed you are from what you were once. Once you were brave and honest, looking like your father: now you look cowardly and cunning and ugly." But the boy did not remember his father's face, and so he did not understand how he himself had changed. The servants, though they tried to be kind, could not be so kind as the father would have been.

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So the boy thought, from what the servants said, that his father would be angry with him, and therefore he said, "I will keep away from my father, for I dare not look him in the face. I had rather keep on at my hard tasks than meet my father."

At last, when all the servants had come back without succeeding, the elder brother said to his father, "I cannot bear that my little brother should grow up in this wicked way: let me go and speak to him." The father consented, and the elder brother set out on his journey; and one day, without saying who he was, he suddenly placed himself in front of his poor brother. "Come home with me," he said. The boy looked up from his hard work to the face of the speaker, and said to himself, "His face is like my father's face: how beautiful it is!" Then, comparing his own mean, sly-looking face with the likeness of his father, he felt at once, "How terribly I am changed; how ugly and how wretched I have become."

This made him very miserable and very

angry. At first he cried out in a passion, "Go away: leave me alone: I cannot bear to see you: I should like to kill you." But the elder brother said, "Why do you want to kill me? Come home to our father." "My father does not love me any longer," said the little boy. "Yes, he does," said the elder brother. "Do you not see that I am like him? And I am sure you feel that I love you. Well, then, believe me, he loves you as I do, and he wants you to come back home with me. I am his son and your dear brother. So pray come."

Then the little child said to himself, "I am not frightened of him: he is my brother, and I feel that he loves me. How good and kind he is! I had almost forgotten my father's face, but now I remember my father is like him. Perhaps, then, my father is good and kind, and loves me, and I need not be afraid of him." Then he said to the elder brother, "I will go home with you."

So, you see, the little boy, though he had not believed the messages of the servants, believed

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the message of the son, because the son was so like the father. Just in the same way, men did not believe in the messages of the Servants or Prophets. Indeed, no messengers nor Prophets could show men how good God is, for they only knew a little of His goodness. All the Prophets confessed that their teaching was not enough, and they used to say that God would send some one to teach men more about Him, and to save men from sinning.

So at last God sent His Son into the world. He was called Jesus, which means *Saviour*, because He came to *save* us from sin and to bring us *safe* to God in heaven. Jesus said that He was one with God, and that anyone that had seen Him had seen God. So by looking at Jesus and seeing how good and kind He was, men saw how good and kind God was. Then they trusted in God: and that helped them to be good.

You see, in the picture at the end, a shepherd bringing home on his shoulders a lamb that has lost his way. Just as the good

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shepherd brings safe home that foolish little lamb that has strayed away from the fold, so Jesus our Saviour brings us safe back to our Father when we forget Him and wander from Him into sin.





#### WHAT JESUS TAUGHT.




**Y**ESUS was very fond of little children, and often spoke about them. Once when some children were being brought to Jesus that He might bless them, some foolish men wanted to drive the little things away. But Jesus said, "Suffer little children

to come to me," and He took them up in His arms and kissed and blessed them.

When Jesus wanted to tell us how very much God loves us, He said that God loves us better than any father on earth loves his dear little children, and so He taught us to call God "our Father in heaven." He taught us that it is the Father's will that all men should love one another like brothers. If anyone insults or injures us, we are not to forget that he is still our brother, though a bad brother. We are never to be tired of forgiving others, just as our Father is never tired of forgiving us. The whole teaching of Jesus about our conduct to others is contained in these words: "Treat all people like brothers and sisters."

It is not easy for us to love all persons. But Jesus told us to trust in Him and He would help us. No one is so bad that Jesus will not forgive him and love him and help him. If we trust in Him, Jesus will take away our sins and selfishness, and make us kind and good. Jesus told us to take care not to say



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or do anything wrong, and to pray every day to God for help to do right. We are not to think too much about eating and drinking and fine clothes, but about pleasing Jesus by doing what is right. We are not to be afraid of death, because our Father will take care of us. He will give us eternal life, and after we have left this world we shall live for ever with Him and with our Father in heaven.

“Look at the pretty flowers,” said Jesus, “look at the birds of the air; they do not work like men, and yet the Father in heaven takes care of them, and gives beautiful leaves to the flowers, and feathers and food to the birds. Do you not think then that He will take care of you?”

Jesus knew that men would not believe in Him, and that they would kill Him. He warned His friends that He should be killed, but He said to them, “After death I will appear to you and help you, and when I go up to heaven and leave you, I will send down to you a Spirit, or Comforter, to help you still.”



Just as a lamp guides people in the dark, so the teaching of Jesus drives away darkness from our hearts and guides us to do right. The teaching of Jesus is a lamp to our souls.





### JESUS HEALING SOULS.



**W**HAT Jesus did is of more importance than what He taught. If His teaching had been read out of a book, or if it had been taught by bad men, it would not have done much good. But, when Jesus taught, such goodness breathed out of Him into the souls of people listening to Him, that very often they could not help trusting in

Him and believing that what He said must be true.

His very presence made men better, so that many sinful persons became sorry for their sins in a moment when He spoke to them ; and they not only *said* they were sorry, but they showed they were really sorry by altering their lives.

I will tell you one story to shew you how Jesus sometimes made men good at once.

At the time when Jesus was teaching in the land of the Jews, there was a set of men in His country called Tax-gatherers. These Tax-gatherers used to collect the taxes that were paid by the Jews to the Romans their conquerors. How would you like it, if Tax-gatherers were to collect taxes from Englishmen to pay to Germans or Frenchmen ? Not at all, I think. Besides, these Tax-gatherers used often to cheat. No wonder that they were very much disliked, and respectable people would not have anything to do with them.

Well, there was a man named Zacchæus, a

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Tax-gatherer, who lived in a town through which Jesus was one day passing. Zacchæus had heard a good deal about Jesus, and wanted very much to see Him. But he said to himself, "No respectable people visit me; how then can I ask Jesus to come to my house? I do not like to ask Him; for, if I did, I dare say He would not so much as speak to me, or even look at me."

However, he thought he should like to have a sight of Jesus' face at all events; so, as the crowd was very thick, and Zacchæus so short that he could not look over their shoulders, he climbed up a sycamore tree, and there waited sadly till Jesus should pass by.

Now, Jesus was at that time in great favour with everybody; and in the whole of the town there was nobody among the gentlemen and clergy that would not have gladly asked Jesus to dine with him. But Jesus did not judge men by their coat or by their trade, but by their heart: and so, looking up and seeing sad Zacchæus earnestly gazing down on Him, He said, "That Tax-gatherer is the man with

whom I will dine. Come down, Zacchæus. I should like to dine with you to-day."

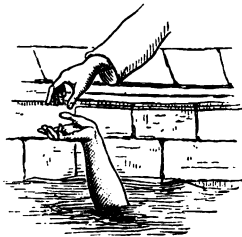
So Jesus and His friends went on to the house of Zacchæus, and there they all dined. During dinner some persons said, "Is it not strange that Jesus should dine with a Tax-gatherer? You and I would not think of doing such a thing." Others said, "If He knew what a cheat this fellow is, and by what bad means he has scraped together his money, Jesus would not have come here."

Meantime poor Zacchæus did all that he could to make Jesus and His friends comfortable. And he felt full of joy to think that, though he was a Tax-gatherer, and though he had cheated like other Tax-gatherers, yet Jesus did not utterly despise him. But, amid all his joy, he felt ashamed that Jesus should love him and trust in him, and yet that he should be a bad man and a cheat. And it came suddenly into his mind that he must now give up all his bad ways; and he thought to himself, "If Jesus, who knows everybody, really loves me and trusts me, surely I am not so

utterly bad, that there is no hope for me." Then he stood up and said aloud, "Sir, I intend to give half of my property to the poor; and if I have cheated anybody, I will give back four times as much as I took away."

Then Jesus was glad, and said, "Zacchæus is this day saved from sinning. That is what I came to do: I came to save sinners."

You see how Jesus, by loving and trusting Zacchæus, made him good instead of bad, and saved him from sinning. In the same way, if we will love Him and trust Him, He will save us. His hand is always near us, though we cannot see it, ready to raise us out of the deep waters of sin.





### JESUS HEALING BODIES.

**J**ESUS did not tell His friends that He was the Saviour of whom the Prophets had spoken; He left them to think for themselves. They heard His teaching and saw the works that He did, and they said to themselves, "This must be the Saviour."

Some other time you must read all about the works of Jesus; for the present I can

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only tell you of what kind most of His works were. He used to cure the dumb, the deaf, the blind, the lame, and those that were troubled with diseases, and this He used to do with a word and in a moment.

I will give you one example of this. Jesus was in a church preaching, and there were a good many clergymen with him. While he was speaking, some men brought him a poor man lying on a bed, so ill that he could not move. Jesus looked at him, and said, "I forgive you your sins."

Then some of the clergymen that did not like Jesus said, "What does Jesus mean by saying 'I forgive'? Men cannot forgive sins. God, and no one else, can do that." Now Jesus knew what they were thinking of: so He said, "When a man is ill, his body is ill; when a man is a sinner, his soul is ill. To shew you that I can forgive this man his sins and cure his soul, I will cure his body."

Then he turned to the man and said, "Get up and walk." And the man, who a moment before had not strength enough to turn him-



self in his bed, at once got up and walked. As for the people in the church, they were delighted, and they said, "God does not want men to be ill in their souls or in their bodies, and so He has sent Jesus to cure both our bodies and our souls."

Look at the poor man in the picture below, lying on his bed all helpless and in pain, and then look at him up above with his eyes fixed on Jesus, feeling, though scarcely believing, that he can stand. His friend is afraid that he will fall, and is holding out a crutch. But he need not fear. The man will not fall, and will never want his crutch again.

Must not Jesus be very powerful, as well as very kind, to drive illness away with a single word?






JESUS SUFFERING AND DYING.



**T**HUS Jesus spent His life healing the souls and bodies of men. Do not think His life was pleasant or comfortable; it was full of sorrow and bitterness. I have told you that Jesus is the Son of

God. But though He is the Son of God, He could feel hunger, and thirst, and cold, and all kinds of pain, just like a common man. Indeed, He used to call Himself the Son of Man, to shew us that He suffered all the pains and troubles that fall on men. He was often hungry and cold and homeless, and once when He was asked where He lived, He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." But there was something far more painful than that. Would you like a little brother of yours to go wrong and to become selfish, unkind, and wicked? Would you not be very sorry? And the more you loved your little brother, the more sorry you would be. Well, Jesus loved all men in the world like brothers; and the more He loved them, the more their diseases and miseries, but most of all their sins and ingratitude, cut Him to the heart.

A few poor people followed Him; but most men laughed at Him or hated Him, and accused Him of wanting to make Himself




king of the land. In the end they seized Him, had Him tried unfairly, and then executed Him as a criminal. In the moment when He was seized, His dearest friends deserted Him, and when He was on the point of being put to death, His enemies scoffed at Him for wanting to be a king, and crowned Him with a mock crown of thorns.

Perhaps you think that it was a very pitiful end for Jesus to be put to death like a common criminal. Indeed His death was pitiful ; but yet much good has come out of it for us.

I told you that Jesus felt and bore the sins of all men as though they were His own, that He was cut to the heart with sorrow for them, because He loved them so much. Now, men might never have known how much Jesus loved them, and how He bore their sins for them if He had not died upon the cross.

If a man says, "I am fond of you, but I will do nothing for you," you do not believe him ; but if he risks his life for you, you believe him at once. Just in the same way, often when men have felt doubtful whether Jesus

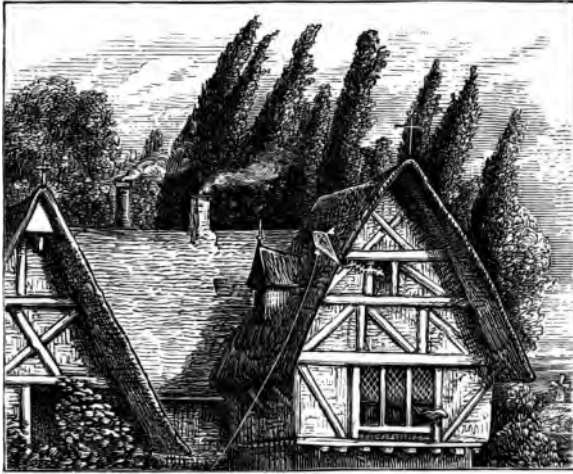


loves them, they have thought of Jesus hanging on the cross and dying for them, and they have said, "We must trust in Jesus."

And when we trust in Jesus, we feel that He bears our sins, and lifts them like a leaden weight from off our hearts. He also gives us strength to fight against our faults. How Jesus does all this, we do not know: but we know that He does it.

Thus He conquers sin and is crowned King, and rules like a king in our hearts. What is the crown that He wears? It is the Crown of Thorns.





### THE SPIRIT.



HAVE said that God *breathed* truth into the hearts of the Prophets, and that Jesus *breathed* goodness into the hearts of poor sinners that trusted in Him.

I did not mean that Jesus moved His lips to breathe goodness; I meant that as our breath passes out of our nostrils invisibly

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into the air that is breathed by others, so goodness, we cannot tell how, passed from Jesus into the hearts of sinners. We do not use the word *breath* to mean this; we call it *spirit*, a word that means much the same thing. Now, when Jesus died, He did not remain in the grave, but shewed Himself to His friends, and told them that He was now going up to the Father in heaven; then He said to them, "Receive the Holy Breath, or Spirit."

From that time till now we have had Christ's Breath or Spirit among us, whispering to us good thoughts, reminding us that God is our Father, and that all men, bad as well as good, are our brothers; and helping us to love each other.

You cannot see the Spirit any more than you can see the wind or breath on a warm day; but wherever you see goodness and kindness, you may know that the Spirit is breathing; just as, whenever you see the smoke drifting sideways as it is in the picture at the beginning, or whenever you see the

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branches bending, or a sailing-boat moving,  
you know that the wind is blowing, although  
the wind itself you cannot see.







THE DEVIL, OR SLANDERER.



HERE is an evil spirit, called the Devil, or Slanderer, because he speaks to men slanders about God. He says to us, "God is not your Father: God does not want you to be His children." He also speaks

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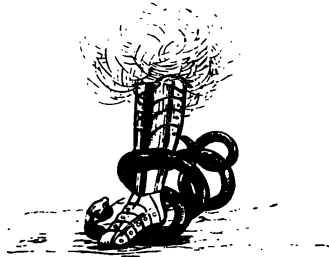
to us slanders about one another, and says, "Your brothers and sisters are selfish, they do not care for you; so you had better not care for them. Your father and mother are unkind because they will not let you have your own way; but do not mind them—do as you like."

The Slanderer comes when we are in pain, or when we want something that we cannot have. "Why," he says, "does not God give you everything that you want, and why does God pain you, if He is your Father?" But we know that God is teaching us by the lesson of pain to be patient and gentle, and to pity other people. So we must say to the Slanderer, "We will not listen to you; God is kind, like our father and mother."

The Bible tells us that it is the Slanderer that causes our pain, but God turns it into good. It was the Slanderer that said to men, "Nail Jesus on the Cross." But you see how much good came from the death of Jesus. If Jesus had not died on the Cross, perhaps you and I would never have known how much Jesus loves us.

There are many things in all this that are hard to understand. God does not mean us to understand all things. He shews us a little of His goodness, and He says, "Trust me." And we ought to trust Him. You will see, in the next lesson, that God will, in the end, take away all sin and sorrow; and then the Slanderer will be quite conquered, like the Dragon, who is being conquered by the Angel in the picture at the beginning of this lesson.

One of the earliest books in the Bible told us, thousands of years ago, that some one should be born who would crush the Slanderer, or Serpent, beneath his heel. Jesus has done this, and is doing it still. As a strong man in armour stamps down a snake, so Jesus destroys Sin by making men good.





### THE KINGDOM OF GOD.



ESUS taught us to say to God, "Thy kingdom come." What do we mean by these words? How is God our King; and when will His kingdom come? I will try to shew you; but I cannot do it without telling you a story.

There was once a king who was made king when he was quite a boy. As he had been a king for only a short time, he did not know very well what a king ought to do, so he said, "A king must always wear a crown of gold, and rich robes, and carry a sceptre in his hand, to shew that he is different from common people;" so, whenever he went about, he wore his crown and sceptre, and he took with him crowds of servants, almost as finely dressed as himself; and he said, "I will make them see that I am a king." But he was not a king: he was nothing but a finely-dressed doll. Some of the people were never tired of looking at the fine sight. But they cared for the sight, not for the king. Others mocked at him, for they said, "The king does not care for us, nor work for us. Why does he not try to make our laws better? We like to see him well dressed, but that is not enough while the laws are so bad. We will not obey him, for he does not behave like a real king."

The young king one day heard some of the people making these complaints aloud, and he

burst into a passion, and cried, "What! will they not obey me? We will see." Then he called his army, and told the soldiers to go through all the country, and to make the people obey him, and to kill any that did not obey. And now, instead of taking finely-dressed servants with him, he used to surround himself with soldiers whenever he went out; so that the people were afraid to complain openly. At first the king was very much pleased, and said, "The people are quite quiet now. I hear no more of their mocking and shouts. I have taught them to obey. I have shewn them that I am a king." But he was not a king; he was a tyrant.


Presently the king became sorry that the people were so silent whenever he rode out. "Once," he said, "they used to cheer me sometimes, and to seem glad to see me: now they all look as though they hated me. Everyone obeys me, but no one obeys me willingly. I will try what kindness can do to make them love me and obey me willingly."

So now he set to work to make the laws as

good as they could be, and he tried to find work for the poor people that had no work, and he taught men how to make their fields produce more corn and vegetables, so that everyone might have plenty to eat. Presently the people said, "Our king is a real king now; he is always trying to help us, and he has made such good laws that we all obey them gladly." And so, now, wherever the king went, whether on horseback or on foot, everyone knew him, and loved him and obeyed him.

Very often he did not wear his gold crown and fine robes: but the people recognized his face wherever he went, and they loved him quite as well without his fine robes as with them. So the king was glad, and said, "Now I feel that I am a king indeed, for my subjects love me and do my will."

Now, just in the same way God's kingdom will come, when all God's subjects love Him and obey Him or do His will. God will not make Himself a tyrant and force us to obey Him. He will be a real king, not a tyrant. So, whenever we say "Thy kingdom



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come, Thy will be done," we mean, "O God, we hope and pray that soon all people may know how kind You are, and may love You and obey You gladly."

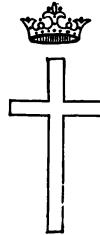
All people do not obey God gladly yet. You and I, do not obey God gladly at all times. But we try to obey Him, and we must try more and more every day. Jesus has promised to help us if we will try and trust in Him. So in the end we shall all obey God gladly, and then God's kingdom will be here.

Will not that be a happy time, when we all obey God gladly, and do His will? I told you before that God's will is that we should love Him as a Father, and that we should love one another as brothers and sisters. When we can do that, there will be no more sullen looks, or unkind words, or angry deeds; no more fretting and vexation, and discontent. Everyone will be kind and gentle; peace and happiness will be everywhere. At that time God will wipe away all tears from every eye, and there will be no more death, no sorrow, nor crying; neither will there be any more pain.



Now you understand what we mean when we say "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."

When God's kingdom comes, we shall look backward on the past, and forward to the future, and we shall see the whole of God's work, and then we shall understand it all, and see that He has done everything for the best. Then, instead of the little dotted line about which I spoke to you in the Lesson of the Year, the whole circle will be complete, and we shall see that out of suffering comes victory. The cross means suffering, and the cross leads to the crown.





the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are poor has increased from 1.2 billion to 1.6 billion.

There are a number of reasons for this. One is that the world population has increased from 5 billion to 6 billion. Another is that the number of people who are poor has increased in many of the world's poorest countries. This is because of a number of factors, including the fact that many of these countries have experienced economic stagnation or decline, and that many of them have high population growth rates.

There are a number of ways in which we can help to reduce the number of people who are poor. One way is to help to improve the economic situation in the world's poorest countries. This can be done by providing them with the resources and support they need to develop their economies. Another way is to help to improve the lives of the people who are poor in these countries. This can be done by providing them with access to education, healthcare, and other social services.

There are a number of organizations that are working to help reduce the number of people who are poor. These include the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations. There are also a number of non-governmental organizations that are working to help reduce the number of people who are poor. These include Oxfam, Christian Aid, and Trócaire.

It is important that we continue to work together to help reduce the number of people who are poor. This is because poverty is a major cause of social and economic instability, and it is a major barrier to development. By helping to reduce the number of people who are poor, we can help to create a more just and more prosperous world.

There are a number of things that we can do to help reduce the number of people who are poor. We can help to improve the economic situation in the world's poorest countries. We can help to improve the lives of the people who are poor in these countries. We can help to provide them with access to education, healthcare, and other social services.

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